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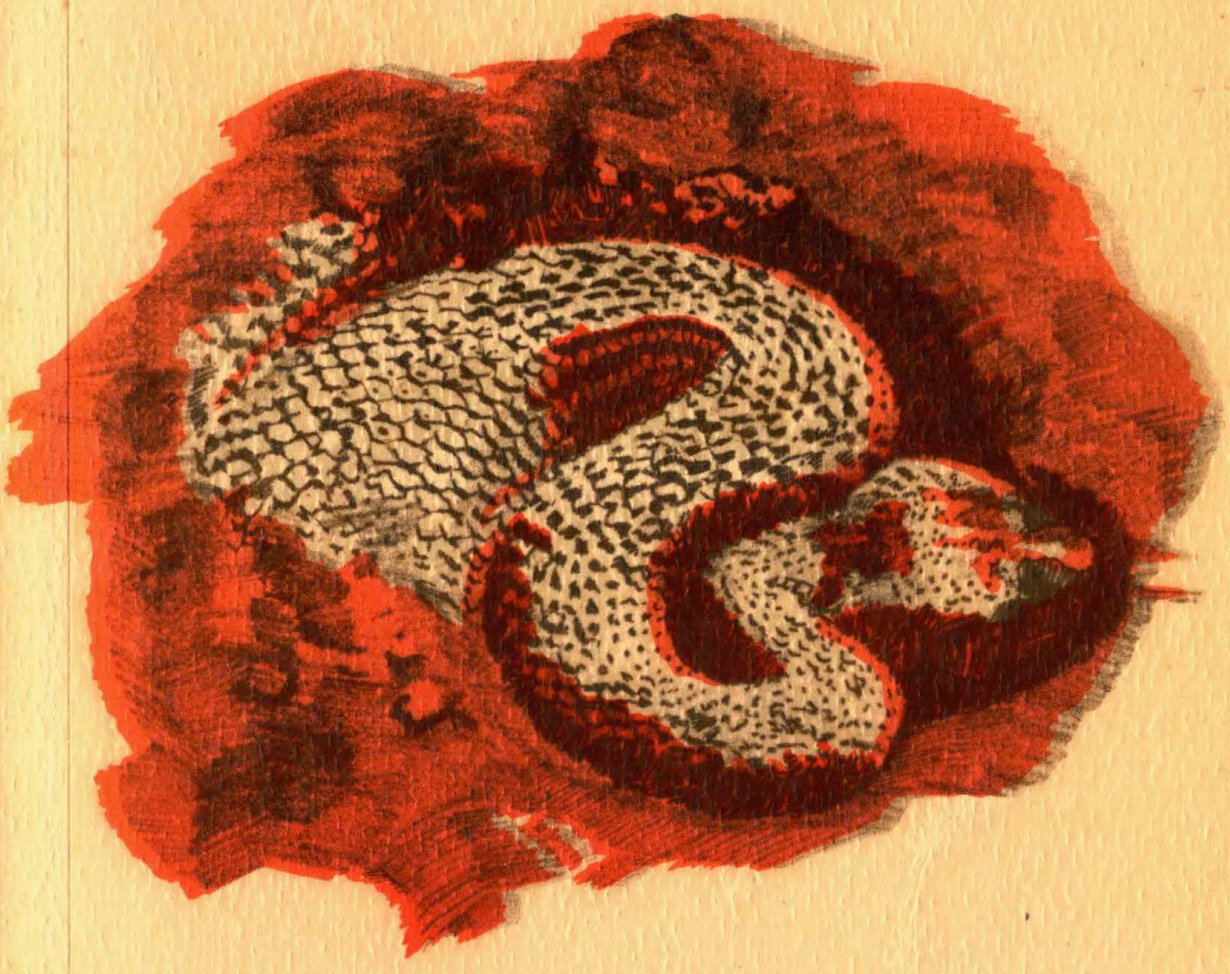
An Otherwise Report

M. Q. Rice
Utah State University



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M. Q. Rice

52nd Faculty Honor Lecture
Utah State University
February 1976

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52nd FACULTY HONOR LECTURE

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY FACULTY ASSOCIATION
Logan, Utah
1975

FIFTY-SECOND HONOR LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY

A basic objective of the Faculty Association of Utah State University, in the words of its constitution, is:

> to encourage intellectual growth and development of its members by sponsoring and arranging for the publication of two annual faculty research lectures in the fields of (1) the biological and exact sciences, including engineering, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Natural Sciences; and (2) the humanities and social sciences, including education and business administration, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities.

The administration of the University is sympathetic with these aims and shares, through the Scholarly Publications Committee, the costs of publishing and distributing these lectures.

Lecturers are chosen by a standing committee of the Faculty Association. Among the factors considered by the committee in choosing lecturers are, in the words of the constitution:

> (1) creative activity in the field of the proposed lecture; (2) publication of research through recognized channels in the field of the proposed lecture; (3) outstanding teaching over an extended period of years; (4) personal influence in developing the character of the students.

M. Q. Rice was selected by the committee to deliver the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities. On behalf of the members of the Association we are happy to present Professor Rice's paper:

AN OTHERWISE REPORT

Committee on Faculty Honor Lecture

AN OTHERWISE REPORT

In defense of myself and the Honors Committee I accept this assignment as a tribute for something, possibly for setting a new record as a hunger artist or for simply staying in town and reciting the penitential psalms daily for over 40 years. I have a sneaking suspicion that they may be exposing me for not being creative in the Greek sense of fulfilling the promise of one's birth. If I had got around to writing Pericles' funeral oration, Dostoevsky's "Grand Inquisitor," or E. E. Cummings' "What if a Much of a Which of a Wind," as I fully intended to do, they surely wouldn't have asked me to give this speech. But they did, confirming my aphorism that life is what we fail to make it. I'll seek comfort in the observation of one of my students, that the nice thing about being mediocre is that you are always at your best; also in the realization that even the seven wise men of Greece would have made serious errors in judgment had they been functioning as a committee.

I have always been awed, and even disheartened, by the achievements, scholarship, and insights of many of my colleagues; and I wish that I could utter some memorable profundities on the mystery of it all, as they do so lucidly and finally. I would like to come up with even one thought worthy of being carved in stone. I know enough about politics to agree with the notion that Prometheus gave man all except political wisdom, which he reserved for the gods. I know enough about the social sciences to be aware of the changes in jargon that so often signify progress. I know enough about religion to sanction Kafka's belief that it is an inescapable fact of life and to add that it isn't any worse than we deserve. I also know enough about history to realize that I need another lifetime to get the message. It's unfortunate that life, like love, is very much a spectator sport that requires more

prescience than we are given in order to comprehend what is going on. Only Greek theater-goers have enjoyed this privilege of full awareness, but we can all catch enough lines to keep us interested. What an experience it is to watch the human race, that magnificent misfit, going on being itself, acting itself out, trying to raise reality to the level of thought, attributing divinity to itself because it needs so badly, trying to fathom its imponderable self, maintaining its position of superiority with endless myths and sailor tales, all the time uneasy about its ability to get along with itself and to answer the really big questions.

If I had any grand observations to make on the spectacle, any philosophical constant, social formula, or religious placebo to offer in the cause of world betterment, I wouldn't have kept it all secret until now. Frankly, the world is to me an eternally baffling and enchanting mystery play that I would be glad to watch endlessly, with periodic renewal from infirmities between the acts. It's perhaps needless to add that I am indisposed to any notions of a hereafter so far contrived, no matter how valiantly they attempt to compensate for the human condition. Reverence for life consumes most of my religious nature. I cannot understand the age-long yearning of people for heaven, and I can't understand why we assume it is well run, considering the people who go there. I much prefer eternal Sesame Street. I say this only to beguile you away from any fear that I have esoteric messages in readiness. Aside from expressing a lack of preference for heaven, I have nothing else to say against it, for I think it foolish to disparage any notion or institution which the human race has felt the need to sustain for thousands of years. Nor do I undervalue the eternal need of people to possess their souls with serenity.

This address is simply a personal testament on the small world I inhabit, the school that has been a sort of earth mother to me, and the concerns of a teacher in the humanities, doing what Alfred North Whitehead said we should, uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning. I continue to be a teacher because I don't know anything for certain, and therefore I prefer to share questions rather than answers. If I were absolutely sure about anything, it wouldn't occur to me to mention it. I have only preferences among variables. I sincerely hope that we

will continue to look through a glass darkly into history, science, God, and ourselves for answers to our questions, and that the search will never be completely satisfying, for a definitive world is unthinkable.

My contribution will not add to the unthinkableness. I have barely enough wisdom to play the Arthur Miller game called getting through the day. I do underscore all sage remarks that expand my consciousness. I cheerfully take all tests that are intended to reveal the extent of one's broadmindedness, though I keep my scores secret. I also take constant notes on the attendant symptoms of greatness, hoping to find one that fits me. The truth is that I am just a very hard working teacher trying to overcome a natural laziness and an accompanying lack of brilliance in the face of expectant students before whom I do not care to put on a second-rate performance. This predicament is enough to keep the churn churning, or more aptly, to keep the rock rolling.

Most every day for nearly 40 years I have done my Sisyphus act, caring a great deal about the rock, rising or falling. (This reminds me that I have always had a funny name: Sisyphus, Philoctetes, Esau, Didymus, Don Quixote, Akaky Akakyevitch, Mr. Sleary, and Bartleby.) It has been my almost incredible privilege to spend most of my life living beyond my intellectual means as a literary *flaneur,* sustained in this indulgent rôle by the enthusiasm of student votaries, the good wishes of equally self-conscious colleagues, and the apathy of people in high places. And what a pleasure it has been. It has been my good fortune to teach a great variety of classes and to learn a great deal in order to seem wiser than the students. Some classes I have taught so many times that I have developed a comforting illusion of adequacy, though I never escape the fear that someone will discover in me the Socratic weakness of the unwise or the unbeautiful, that he does not feel the need for what he does not think he lacks. At least I shall have no cause to make a self-disparaging comment like that of Robert Morse Lovett when he retired from the University of Chicago. He said, I trust with tongue much in cheek, that he intended to spend his time reading a good deal of the literature he had lectured on so brilliantly.

I am frankly not a downright scholar on any subject I can

think of, though I perhaps know more about the influence of modern plumbing on the contemporary short story, more about the historical errors in the book of Judith, more about the exegetic asininities on the Song of Solomon than does anyone else in Cache Valley.

Sparing you a discussion of these topics, what else is there? I wish I were like the devil in the Book of Job, considering things of the earth after going to and fro and walking up and down in it. But I haven't seen that much, and the world has been rather puzzling ever since I discovered that it extended beyond Davis County. Thoreau, who didn't get around much, made the prideful observation that he had traveled a good deal in Concord. There the comparison between me and Thoreau ends, except that we share the belief that one should simplify, simplify, simplify. People like him can find the world in a grain of sand. I do well to find the sand. I have traveled a good deal in literature, and in the minds of students, though; and most of a life spent watching the not-so-divine comedy from a balcony seat here in upper-Mormonia has not been exactly a lungfish existence. I would gladly do it all again from the same place. I do not agree with E. G. Peterson that Logan is the Athens of the West, but I applaud the aspiration. Antigone could have lived here invisible. The setting is ideal, and I have never had either the desire or the wax wings to escape the cultural labyrinth. The society is so comfortably homogenized that one can readily become a non-intensifying particle in it or ignore it altogether, like a shelf filled with colorful paper towels and kleenex boxes. The valley had as much physical beauty as I can respond to and as much exciting eventfulness as I can stand, meaning almost none.

I once found my life's objective correlative in the Golden Gate Park museum. It was a small, poisonous sand viper in a display case about one foot square. The snake was coiled about a clay mound, contemplating whatever came by, oblivious to both the food and water placed ready for its use. To the side, a glass-covered note read: "Please do not worry about this snake. If it had an entire desert at its disposal, this is all the space it would use." Well, as Aristotle would say, so much for Cache Valley.

And what about the university that keeps the valley from being

an incidental piece of admirable geography? Without being either maudlin or sententious, I should like to offer a few generalities that I hope still glitter. Possibly because every educational experience has transcended my expectations, I have been continually impressed by the effect of this institution on the people who make use of it. Outwardly it's a nicely structured system to suit administrative needs. Inwardly it's a worker of incalculable magic that even the performers do not understand. We do know that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It has tangential or measurable energies in some degree, but it has mainly radial energies that defy analysis. We can know how much something costs, but not how much it means. We can know how many facts someone has learned, but not the effect or the excitement of the learning. We will never know the value of each dollar a student spends for education, because we will never know what he would have become without it.

A university is not so much an institution as it is a unique arrangement of mutually stimulating people who care a great deal about what they are doing. It's not just a community of scholars, as it is assumed, ideally, to be. It's a situation that provides maximum heuristic values and permits everyone to be used at his best. Nowhere else is there a comparable opportunity for self-discovery of one's latent talents and creative energies. Whatever the cost of this discovery, it is the best guarantee of an enlightened and productive citizenry. Even if a person made no demonstrable use of his university training, he would at least have heightened his awareness and reduced the world's ignorance quota by one. I have an unholy fear of ignorance and the mass mind that simply responds to strong stimuli. University-inspired respect for investigation and for traditional intellectual processes may even save us from the insidiousness of federal agencies and Madison Avenue social engineers. Bertrand Russell said that our most pressing task is to cope with men intoxicated with the prospect of almost unlimited power and also with the apathy of the powerless. This can be done only by institutions that preserve and revere the freedom to think, to express, to evaluate, and to reject.

Like God and Nature, a university is not impressively efficient in its workings. Many of its procedures would drive a time-motion

expert into Zen shock. It could not survive the imposition of practices that make a business a success, and if it did, it would produce only packaged commodities labeled "The New Improved Human Being." Still, many otherwise intelligent planners want us to educate people only to prepare them for a success track in business and industry. This would be the shortest route to the functioning of a Gresham's Law in education that would result in the hoarding, God knows where, of our best minds. We are being deluged with earnest proposals to make radical changes in the nation's university system for the purpose of making us more credible to the laboring class, less susceptible to moral bankruptcy, more relevant to the uses of some vague thing called society that we are seemingly not a part of. What these far-seers really want, I think, is to make us more responsive to future shock and to groom us as the new scapegoat for mankind's next great failure. I do not understand the rationale back of the suggestions for revolutionary change in the university system, but I do sympathize with the need of the writers to get something published. Today, if you do not know anything deliciously scandalous about some great public figure, you can at least get into print by attacking the educational process.

We do, of course, need the constant pressure of thoughtful criticism, for nothing is completely sacred, sovereign, and unaccountable. Every individual and institution should expect to spend time in the stocks, abiding the question, to use Matthew Arnold's nice phrase. I do feel a strong sense of chagrin, though, when we are denounced by either the ignorant, the fearful, the envious, or those with vested interests in matters outside our concerns. We are not a static entity in society or an artificial life pattern. We are not a culture that spawns iniquity. We don't openly champion either the 7 deadly sins or the 7 deadly virtues. We are simply involved with the lives of people mainly between the ages of 17 and 21, a highly fissionable group that one constantly expects to vaporize from the heat and pressure of internal forces. What is truly amazing, though, is their civility and their pervasive decency. Nor do I think that we waste students' time by keeping them off the labor market. If we do waste anyone's time, we do it more constructively than he could do it for himself. We may spend some unprofitable time in advanced baby tending, but even that we do

better than anyone else. Though we get no public credit for it, we are also the most effective matrimonial clearing house ever conceived. This is especially important in the creation of a populace that must continue to be more intelligent and respectable than its leaders.

What I like best about our own institution is its lack of pretentiousness and its lack of need for it. Remarkable people have energized the school, a consistently excellent faculty, competent administrators, and especially knowledgeable presidents. I have limitless respect for President E. G. Peterson, the caryatid of my early years, who preached to us the blessings of poverty, for that is what we had; for President F. S. Harris, who inspired the first foreign-student program; for renaissance President Daryl Chase, who made us a univesity; and for President Glen L. Taggart, who with President Chase has been one of the significant builders of the school. We have achieved recognition without being noisy about it. We have had no occasion to cover up any inadequacies by lush descriptions of our truly beautiful campus, by the use of identifying epithets that suggest animal virility, by the imposition of superficial dress codes or by guarantees of success, spiritual sublimation, and character perfection. E. G. Peterson did say that if God was able to raise children unto Abraham from stones of the road, we could make productive ladies and gentlemen out of anyone who came here. This may be so, but we don't shout about it. I agree with Woodrow Wilson that character is a by-product of life and that a man who sets out deliberately to cultivate his character will end up with something that makes him intolerable to his fellow men. We have no slogans that suggest wondrous character alchemy or that lead anyone to assume that he has found exclusive wisdom and a superior way of life only because of us.

The students who come here suit me perfectly with their blend of brilliance, earnestness, dedication, harmless idiosyncrasies, and beguiling naivete. I get my conviction of immortality from them. They do have one agreeably bad effect on our lives. Granted that association with such vital and talented people is a major reward for teaching, it is a lotus blessing. I have not found faculty members to be notably mature people, despite their palpable accomplishments and their often shocking intelligence. The trouble lies mainly

in the quality of students, who represent the rosy segment of life's spectrum. They keep us alert and gently worried, but neither tolerant nor plagued. We have an edgy feeling that the world is meaner than our vision of it. We lead a highly eclectic existence as teachers, associating with the best of the good. We don't spend agonizing time on the ash heap wondering why trouble comes. I know of and appreciate the few individuals on the staff who live under a flat rock where the real squirming is. They come out and slay the dragons, lop off hydra heads, put eggs back together, and cry a lot; but most of us do not endure in ten years as many unlovely people as a check-out girl in a grocery store does on a long afternoon. We don't suffer much from fire breathers, just enough to prove that we are alive. I've met a few amusingly reprehensible people, but no deplorable ones. And then there is the accumulated contentment from feeling that we may have been in any way responsible for the achievements of those who leave here to make distinguished use of their talents in the major institutions of the world.

I doubt that it is a matter of general concern, but I have a compulsion to explain briefly how I got involved in this type of life, and what has been significant about it to me, to the students, and maybe to the people who have to justify my salary. First, I was fortunate not to be successful too soon in life. I had an early desire to be a hell-fire-and-damnation preacher, but I didn't have enough doubts about God to feel that he needed me to missionary for his cause. I did become a bit dubious when I prayed that Herbert Hoover would defeat Al Smith, and God answered my prayer. I might have become a farmer, but I realized that the intention of a marginal farm is to kill off the people it shelters and give them a minimal reward for the privilege. The school system may have the same plan, but the victims have a better time and meet more interesting travelers.

I became obsessed with the desire for a college education through an epiphany that I thought matched the star of Bethlehem. Most people have experiences that influence their destinies or beliefs —like Flannery O'Connor's discovery that her pet chicken could walk either forward or backward. She spent the rest of her life doing both of those things simultaneously. I had to wait until I

was out of high school, when a friend who had been away to college explained to me the principle of the thermocouple that would turn things off and on without human assistance. I immediately envisioned our entire farm run by two giant strips of metal with different coefficients of expansion, and I wanted to spend my life with people whose interests transcended chicken behavior. It also occurred to me that people who submit to the impact of knowledge live longer than others by increasing the amount of eventfulness in their lives. It is possible to die at age 70, having barely reached age 15, if you have lived in a world of fixed values and low-wattage events.

I did not know it then, but the Depression era was an ideal time to get a college education. An almost total lack of distractions provided limitless time for study. Money was no problem, either; there wasn't any. What one needed, mainly, was the will, a saving set of parents to provide $63 tuition, a little help from Les Pocock, and the encouragement of Milt Merrill, one of the all-time great figures of this campus. Of course, all of the 80 or so faculty and the handful of administrators were impressive to me. I knew them all, including the buildings and grounds staff, both Mr. Batt and Mr. Larson. But the real excitement was competitive association with some 1600 students who made the campus feel like classical Athens, and kept it just as free of cars.

Students today are brighter and better informed than we were, but they suffer more than we did from being programmed, labeled, and channeled toward reachable goals. We had a greater number of purposeless interests, more concern for learning for learning's sake, less fear of failure—since we didn't know for sure where we were going—and less need for absurd striving for individualism by imitation of other individualists. We didn't even know the word. We did have one undeniable individualist on the campus in those days, but we merely called him "Sarge" Callahan and envied his outrageous temerity in smoking his pipe openly on campus in front of the students, God, and everybody. He was conspicuous mainly because everything was compact, clear, and simple—also *pure,* according to established myth. One never expected to see either a smoker or a pregnant coed on campus. We had rules and

traditions that remained inviolable. Today, things are more sprawly, opaque, and complex, and students are thoughtlessly casual about not being any worse than we were.

Logan, at the time that I came here in 1932, was referred to in the catalogue as a quiet, orderly, clean, and generally attractive town of 12,000 thrifty and progressive citizens. It was proud of the fact that a railroad ran along Main Street and that the town was on the road to Yellowstone Park. We students were mainly interested in the Gem Theater, the two dance halls now occupied by Mode-O-Day and Sears, and the old Skanchy grocery store. The rest of the town was incidental to our concerns, but unobjectionable. After all, we lived mainly on and near the campus. Downtown was a long walk. The school and the boarding house offered a full life, added to by those two fringe establishments, the L.D.S. Institute and the "Bird." They lured so many different types of students for so many years that they developed overlapping migration routes.

Then there were those great social centers, the old Smart Gym and the hall of the Main Building, which my generation thought of in full caps. Today when I walk through the Main, I sense that it is useful, desperately segmented, and relatively dull, with a few glary improvements in lighting and paint; but I am sentimentally aware that for decades it bore the history and spirit of the university, also that the courses of more lives have been determined there than in any other single place in the state that I can think of.

The faculty of the time was so enthralling that I am surprised I ever graduated or found a major interest. Every teacher had his own magic. Leon Linford was the brightest and most articulate person I had ever seen. He made physics irresistible. J. Sedley Stanford taught zoology so well that only the smell of formaldehyde kept me out of his field. W. W. Henderson's lectures on genetics were so clear and simple that it was years before I realized that I hadn't learned anything because I hadn't needed to think. Vance Tingey either charmed or frightened all comers into learning math. All of my foolish notions about a career in the world of precision and cold fact collapsed, though, with mutual benefit to me and science in the presence of Sherwin Maeser in chemistry. He was

one of the great gentlemen of the campus, but he was one of the most formidable and demanding teachers we have ever had. He once told me that he was very proud of the service he had done by keeping misfits out of chemistry and encouraging them to use their talents more profitably elsewhere. His list of rejects included several admirable members of the faculty and not a few distinguished public figures. He convinced me that I would never be contented in a world of exact measurements, for I was (and am) the kind of person who likes to step off a hundred yards, then measure a race with a stop watch; also I cared too much about processes and too little about results. That, I thought, was not a bad way to be. I abandoned the empirical sciences, developed an amused contempt for the pseudosciences, and became a permanent candle-bearer for the values of the humanities that were introduced to me by a wondrous group of people, including N. A. Pedersen, A. N. Sorensen, Wallace Vickers, Charlotte Kyle, Milt Merrill, George Jensen, and a new, exciting teacher named King Hendricks.

This brings me deviously to the title of my lecture. When I came here to teach, I realized that it was not possible to explore the history of ideas through literature without occasionally violating a taboo of our culture that I had understood well since childhood: one does not with impunity moo back at sacred cows. One can do this and survive only if he is as harmless as a boxelder bug, has a pioneer background, a big smile, and needs relatively few friends. Even now, I can hardly believe in the seriousness with which the watchdogs of our society view their rôle. They remind me of Faulkner's Old Doc Hines, who felt that God did not make the world evil enough to demand his personal attention, but left its guidance to Old Doc Hines. When I felt the first repercussions from even mildly disturbing the ideological status quo by questioning some of the oracular wisdom I had heard all my life, I was encouraged by the attitude of Dr. Vickers. He viewed such matters with the serenity of a man who has paid his dues. "An English professor," he said, "is a person who thinks otherwise." I would add, "Try it, you'll like it."

The formula for otherwise thinking is very simple. Don't spit out the seeds. One should make learning a total experience, if possible. By this I don't mean simply dabbling in a multiplicity

of fields, but avoiding a fixed and limiting point of view. If one accepts only agreeable ideas, he soon resembles the grotesque mandarin image that does nothing but nod in the affirmative once it has been set in motion. Every idea has a flip side. Every proposal has an unattractive alternative worthy of consideration. Every belief has a disturbing heresy worth exploring. Every sacred tradition has some unlovely consequences that we should be aware of. Every accepted fad has in it a destructive excess. Why not explore the total? Why accept only what someone else finds exemplary? I do agree with Socrates that we should sing ourselves hymns of comfort about what we can't know for certain, but I don't believe we should listen to nothing else.

Many of our students, of course, are not accustomed to otherwise thinking. They have been sustained by soft illusions with cream centers. Simple answers have satisfied them because they have not yet discovered the complexity of the questions. They choose not to agree wtih Kafka that one reaches maturity when he finds that everything runs backwards, or with Freud that every young man must finally realize that the reality of life is what the neighbors say it is. Some of these students are surprisingly willing to begin to examine and question traditional values rather than simply accept them. Others would rather die. My own experience tells me that the latter fall into two groups. One is forgiving and defends himself against any of my conflicting beliefs by calling me witty and irreverent, which seem to mean the same thing. This kind of student endures my classes as exercises in the development of his tolerance. The other type is more rare, but easy to detect. He comes to school equipped with an umbilical cord that he plugs only into sources of comfort. If he does not find what he needs, he merely unplugs himself and goes in search of more sincere pumpkin patches, leaving both of us happy in the thought that the other is hopeless.

I do not think I have an obligation to make only sanctioned statements. I do a better service to students by calling their attention to what J. S. Mill called the tryranny of majority opinion. Mainly, I like to provoke a sense of wonderment, without which there is no learning. I don't think I am in danger of becoming a solipsist, for I am always dubious about my point of view. I know

the world is superficially Eucildean, but I haven't found in it any unyielding absolutes, and therefore offer no sacrifices to it. I revere thousands of great utterances from the Bible to "Peanuts," both of which I study with fascination. If I have a credo I live by, however, it is from a book called *Metaphor and Reality* by Philip Wheelwright. He says, "If we cannot hope ever to be perfectly right, we can find both enlightenment and refreshment by changing, from time to time, our ways of being wrong."

From time to time I have strong convictions about concepts that have survived the dialetic of history, whether or not they are eternal truths. I have no reason to doubt Sophocles' theory that tragedy results from the fact that knowledge comes too late to help. I'm still looking for an exception. Every day I am reminded of Herodotus' announcement that power is a slippery thing. We would have almost no news if this weren't true. No one questions Heraclitus' observation that nothing abides. I don't anticipate a better formula for happiness than Aristotle's: complete self-fulfillment and a reward for your labor. Lucretius' notion that life is worth living just for the pleasure of understanding things is good enough for me. For that reason I cherish the injunction from Proverbs: "With all thy getting get understanding." I even agree with the Hindus that learning heightens the charm of a homely face. The nearest thing to ultimate comprehension of things is echoed in Aaron's "Thou knowest the people." There is hardly a day when I do not reorder the confusing affairs of the world by recalling Aaron's reply to Moses' question on why he had built the golden calf: "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, make us Gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." It's a melancholy reflection that so much of mankind's intellectual energy that should have gone into knowing the people has been drained off to answer questions which Buddha said lead not to enlightenment.

Because I have so much reverence for the language in which most of man's irreducible statements of wisdom are expressed, I only wish that more of them were as eternally applicable as Hippocrates' enduring aphorism: "Life is short, art is long, occasion fleeting, experience fallacious, and judgment difficult." I wish Solon's credo

were less certain: "Count no man fortunate until you see how he dies." I would not go so far as Euripides and Sherwood Anderson and say that any truth which people take to themselves and defend as absolute ultimately becomes a lie, for there are some stunning simplicities that are hard to abandon because they are so useful in daily evaluations. Pride still goeth before Watergate, and those who trouble their own houses do indeed inherit the wind.

I don't have a well-defined system of black and white values because I always remember Milt Merrill's statement that wars are never fought between rights and wrongs, always between dead-rights. The theory applies to every conflict of interests and beliefs. The only certainties in my list of dependable ethics are Christ's Second Commandment and Confucius' Golden Rule, both revered in almost every culture. Even when they are ignored, they remain as the only truly valid measures of people's civility and spirituality, and they need reassurtion whenever the world is afflicted, as much of it appears to be today, with classical accidia, or spiritual suicide from the inability to find joy in caring enough about something.

Many ideas are worth clinging to only because they are what Socrates called "noble risks," like his belief in the immortality of the soul and his conviction that the unexamined life is not worth living. I would add John Henry Newman's related observation that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward. Pericles' assumption that reverence creates a saving restraint in people may be a less than noble risk, but it is preferable to the belief that irreverence is a constructive trait.

Some ideas are so beautiful that one would love them even if they were an outrage to theology, science, and T. S. Eliot. I feel certain that the gates of Thebes really didn't open to the sound of musical notes, but I wouldn't doubt it for a moment. Socrates says that all learning is remembering. Experience merely awakens us to what we already know. He also insists that everything in the physical world is good and true and beautiful in the degree to which it participates in its own essence. To me, the elegance of such thoughts outweighs all opinion to the contrary. For sheer radiance as a conception, I know of nothing to match Teilhard's debatable definition of evolution as the rise of consciousness in progressively

complexified forms of life. What matters is mindedness, not morphology. And even if I didn't believe in God, I would accept Einstein's notion that God manifests himself in the minute details of the universe, also that the harmony of natural law reveals an intelligence which makes all human thinking no more than insignificant reflection. I'm not surprised that a man with such transcedent visions should be called an atheist.

Many ideas appeal to me because of their *shibusa.* This is a Japanese word that we need to add to our language. It identifies that which remains after novelty wears off. It's the look on an old face that isn't going to change again before resurrection morning. It's the design one sees in winter weeds or in tree limbs when the gaudy leaves have fallen. It's the ethos that reveals itself in a person one has known long and well. It's what we see on that clear day when the song-writer says we can see forever. Ideas with *shibusa* are often distillations made at the ends of lives or after illuminating failures that inspire old people to write proverbs as warnings for the young. How many collapsed dreams it must have taken before the anonymous mother of one of my students announced that life is what happens while we are making plans. Oedipus should have said it, but he learned equally memorable lessons. Most conspicuous to me was his bleak discovery that answering the riddle of this sphinx gave him only a public reputation for wisdom; it did not make him master of irrational evil. How long it must have taken Solon to shake life down to the two inscriptions on the gates at Delphi: "Know Thyself" and "Nothing in Excess." The world must have become bone-clear to the preacher in Ecclesiastes when he wrote "Times and Seasons" and also advised his listeners to find God early before evil days come. And there is Job's quiet aside that has more resonance for me than do his grand outbursts: "The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat."

Unfortunately, these peeled utterances don't look very impressive in a junky paragraph. Simplicities are hard to handle. Maybe that is why we pay too little attention to what seem like incidental remarks. Sophocles said that old men are sustained by liquor and wrath. It's that simple, but wrath is adequate for nondrinkers. And God knows who said that dragons guard everything

of value. I believe it, but I wish the statement made a Ciceronian noise. It's very quiet, like Tolstoi's suggestion that everyone get off everyone's back.

A concept needn't be true, useful, or loud to be memorable, though. Anything that expands our awareness is worth our attention. I am always pleased to find that students share my feeling of importance about much that is trivial and irrelevant. One can hardly live a full life without knowing that early Egyptian artists seem to have thought that people have two left feet, that Zoroastrians invented angels and sent dogs to heaven, that fish share man's territorial imperative, that there was once an order of nuns made up of retired or reformed harlots, and that Eve really ate an apricot, not an apple.

Our present world, which worships the G.N.P., finds God on bumper stickers, expresses love on sweat shirts, and is preeminently good at working gadgets, creates the illusion that the only worthwhile knowledge is that which reduces pollution or improves color TV. A prevailing opinion is that the humanities offer nothing but fringe benefits in education. Well, conspicuous numbers of students are not fully absorbed in the technological parade; they are not content with only a computerized future and Pepsi-generation frenzy. If they seem alienated and alarmingly reactive, as very good rhetoricians insist, it is because they have lost both the comfort and the meaningfulness of a sense of continuity with the past. A person is most alone when he is disjoined from history and his cultural heritage. The humanities are the principal bearer of this heritage. Lovers of useful and demonstrable facts do become suspicious of us, however, because our responses do not always match their expectations.

The humanities exist somewhere in the shadowland between the worlds of fact and no-fact, the polarities in our intellectual tradition. They permit us to look at two or more aspects of life at the same time and choose our enthusiasms. We know, for example, that the Parthenon is a sturdy but leaky building with no flat surfaces on the pillars, but we like to concern ourselves with the more subtle fact that it represents a Greek ideal of the Golden Age and reflects the strain of carrying its own weight. We applaud the advent of the Copennican theory, not because it was more valid

than the Ptolemaic, but because it ended paralysis of thought about the nature of the universe and gave the mass human ego its first great edifying blow. We know how important chlorophyl is, and even pretend scientific interest, but what excites us most is that it doesn't turn baby blue. Literature permits us to learn very important things about the universe or simply to enjoy the realization that the sun can't blow up.

As teachers, we are never quite comfortable in our position, because we lack those certainties that give respectability to science and those that give persistence to theology. Also, we are suspect because we give so much attention to things that have gone wrong or haven't worked out well. Literature is mainly a police report on mankind, listing its evil doings and the consequences of its indiscretions. Or you might call it an autopsy on diseased tissue, showing why the patient died. It isn't incidental that most of the world's memorable literature, including the Bible, is spawned at the ends of greatness when schemes and ideologies are collapsing. I think it is safe to add that institutions build the showiest monuments to themselves when their ideals begin to fail. As we look ahead to the painful end of the greedy oil age, we may anticipate a return to literary greatness; we can at least hope to produce something more sublime than *Love Story* or any of the currently popular woodland wanderings into unreality.

Fearing scorn from positive thinkers, we English teachers seldom confess that we learn most things of value from studies of failure and misery rather than from examples of success and well-being. I learn nothing useful from studying the exemplary life of Elsie Dinsmore or listening to the happy thoughts of Oral Roberts. My favorite literary form is the short story, whose writers show how the dark proverbs continue to apply. They seem unaware of the uplifting aspects of life. They prefer to demonstrate why the world keeps running against our happy anticipations. We don't look to stories for moral platitudes, but mainly for living examples of things not to do. To many people, this concern with the evil mask of society is outrageous, when there are so many good things to beguile us.

I divide all literature into two classes, paregoric and mithridatic, one for soothing the multitudes and reducing pain, after the

fashion of speakers in the Agora; the other for building up an immunity against existence by feeding us a little poison every day, as Mithridates did for himself, so that the big doses won't kill us. Most of the enduring scriptures, myths, dramas, poetry, and fiction are decidedly mithridatic. By nature and old habit, man is a problem solver and would perish from boredom if the solutions were not always beyond his capabilities. We should be strengthened by the literature that reveals the consequences of evil or depicts man's continued striving toward illusions of certainty that aren't really attainable but do give him the will to continue. I don't care to belittle paregorical literature which brings assurance and contentment, even tunnel vision and advanced euphoria, to those who have the need. Avoiding this type of literature, though, keeps me feeling important for what I don't teach. For example, I am glad for the privilege of teaching *The Brothers Karamazov,* overjoyed that I don't teach *Jonathan Livingston Seagull.*

I could not teach anything designed to create a belief that perfection is attainable, though I believe the struggle is advisable. Lessing disturbed his 18th century world with the notion that the pursuit of goals and ideals is more important than their attainment. I only wish the world were still disturbed. Few people are more pathetic than those who have found contentment in the achievement of goals. They never again know the pleasures of dissatisfaction and the conatus that develops from a sense of honest failure. They concern themselves only with things teleological, and they deserve to spend eternity in John's New Jerusalem. One of the paradoxes of existence is that most of us actually look for a time when we will have it made and can find peace in the center of a circle or own a little place with Lennie's rabbits, living off the fat of the land. Luckily, life seldom provides the opportunity, for we couldn't endure the comfort, though it doesn't make one popular to say so. People seldom want to be reminded of what they know is true.

Even if I had the talent, I couldn't guide a student onto a success track at the expense of total experience or natural desire. I have had to watch too many students reluctantly living out their parents' fixed visions of achievement, too many faculty members sacrificed to someone's ego-fulfillment or need for success. Misuse of other people is a major social crime, but it isn't just this insensi-

tivity that I object to in goal-lovers, or the fact that the Peter Principle so conspicuously applies to them; it's the aftermath: the self-esteem, the assumption of virtue, and worst of all, the insistence that the achievers are models for others. To me, the successful man is a Schweitzer, who overcomes his pessimistic thinking by optimistic doing. He finds an enthusiasm to match his talent and lets them lead him wherever they will. He finds pleasure in the full use of himself for the benefit of others, always aware that the only thing he has is what he gives away. He is a meliorist who continues to hope that he is doing more good than harm, but never with a sense of sufficiency. Our faculty is always well supplied with such constructively worrisome strivers. Seeing a person working for himself with complete confidence is a chilling experience. You can be sure that he has stolen his ideas from someone else and has taken all the credit.

I like the dubious, self-riddling people of the world, those without full assurance in themselves or satisfaction with their ideas or accomplishments: Job, Socrates, Euripides, Koheleth, Cervantes, Milton, Voltaire, Goethe, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and Kafka. I admire the brilliance, intensity, and verbal facility of men like Jeremiah, Aristotle, St. Paul, Thomas Aquinas, Leibnitz, Rousseau, Emerson, and Billy Graham, but they lack the grace to be wrong. A writer who imposes his unyielding values on others as certainties may be provocative and widely influential, but he needs someone besides me to champion him in classes.

This generation of students has been notably receptive to mithridatic literature. It assures them that they aren't as exclusive as they would like to be, convinces them that uncertainty is an old commodity, that *angst* is just a German word for an eternal condition, and that all of our basic problems and behaviors have ancient patterns that don't change much in modern dress on a wide screen. I should add parenthetically here that I use the term generation desperately. Hardly anything endures long enough today to be called a cycle, a mode, or even a trend. In 1921, George Santayana wrote a poem, "My Heart Rebels Against My Generation." Today the subject would vanish before the poem was finished. But tempo, like noise, is just a nervous condition of society and doesn't alter anything except pill and liquor consumption. We may, as prophe-

sied, be entering a Third World, but a new man won't live in it, only a speedier one with a Thurber-like furtive look. Nor will it have different seeds of destruction, just new places for them to sprout. No matter how frantic the world appears at any moment, literature revives our confidence in the resurgence of old values.

After a lifetime spent reading mithridatic literature and the dismalias of history, I have derived a Perverse Law of Accrued Attributes, which says that man's basic nature does not change much regardless of historical progression, societal shifts, educational training, and religious teaching. A person with a rooted desire to pound his high chair for attention is both eternal and ubiquitous. If he lived in Babylon, we call him ancient. If he lives in Washington, we call him a politician. If he is contemporary and local, educated to a PhD., and has attended church all his life, he becomes a well educated, highly spiritualized associate who pounds his high chair for attention.

What makes history so interesting is the number of people you meet whom you already know. The Bible writers knew almost every type of person that God had in mind to people the world. It is little wonder that Picasso criticized him for lack of style. Just a few years ago, *Time-Life* editors identified Dante's gallery of villains from modern news pictures. Only the press coverage changes, though. The misfits whom Plato would have confined to the back streets of Athens are now in the headlines. It's hardly worth mentioning that if people and events were as new and different as we pretend they are, no one would read the literature of the past. The tempo of eventfulness and the immediacy of impact created by the genius of our media leave us with the feeling that our time is exclusive in all respects. Only the reporting has changed significantly, creating a nervous awareness that leads to anxiety.

Disturbed, but history-minded, I cannot rise to a proper state of despair about the modern world. What with problems related to diet, predators, agriculture, environment, lack of free enterprise, unequal rights, tyrannical authority, limits of inquiry, insecurity, favoritism, persecution, anxiety, conflicting ideologies, buckpassing, deception, displacement, alienation, sex, pornography, and violence, the future didn't look very good in the Garden of

Eden, either. Considering its flaky beginnings and the magnitude of its continuing challenges, the human race has exceeded its promise, and will no doubt continue to do so. It may have melodramatic means of destruction, but it has the will and the ingenuity to survive. At any time in history I could have lived with the expectation of the immediate collapse of mankind.

The eternal problems of *synoikism,* the Greek word for the art of living together, are so familiar that whenever anyone discovers a new idea, plan, or cause for alarm, the next step is to look it up in Plato or the Bible and to see what the Hindus thought about it. We do like to worry creatively and to feel that the problems are big enough to challenge our talents and exclusive enough to give our time special significance. I know that it's important to wonder whether race problems will destroy our culture and whether we will blow ourselves up, eat ourselves up, reproduce ourselves out, or suffocate in a giant cesspool. It is also important to remember that if we perish from one of these likelihoods it will be for the same reason that Zeus killed off the first generation, that is, for its misuse of knowledge.

Our world reminds me of nothing so much as that of Kafka's dogs, proud of their superior intelligence, their cultural progress, and their scientific achievements in both the practical and speculative realms. What a talent they had for investigation and for thinking up provocative questions. They had an equally great talent for not finding any answers. They did conclude, however, that dogdom could be saved under two conditions: first, that all the dogs learn to think at once, and second, that they all learn how to fast. Since I have always wanted to be a prophet, I'll say that these are the means to our own salvation, though they are no more popular at present than they were among the dogs.

I resist the urge to prophesy, however, because I consider it a sign of discontent in old age and of need for superiority based on illusions, fearfully imminent conditions that I hope to avoid.

I would like to watch the current show for as long as possible to see how things turn out. The destinies of young people, students especially, interest me most. Will they adapt to Future Shock from the accellerated bombardment of knowledge and eventfulness seemingly too great for fragile humanity? Is their world, now barely

maintaining its angle of repose, going to slide into a heap? Is their mental resiliency equal to the tensions created by desperate programmers, jargoneers, evaluators, and curriculum jugglers?

Most of all, I want to see what their next baroque expression will be like. The baroque temper has been apparent on campuses for some time and promises to continue. The word itself refers to an uneven pearl that gets its lopsided appearance from a disbalance of internal forces. Historically, it applies to periods of artistic and ideological disquiet when there is an unresolvable disparity between inherited traditions and the observable facts of existence. Sacredly held beliefs no longer fit the scene. But, because traditional concepts endure for the same reason that Will Cuppy applies to pyramids, namely, that they have no tendency to fall down, the baroquely inspired person senses futility in direct attack on inherited values that he can't accept. He can, however, attempt to embarrass both reality and tradition for being what they are. This is done by outward displays that shock the senses. Thus to conventional minds he becomes a study in bad taste, whether he is Buddha, Socrates, Aristophanes, Christ, Michaelangelo, Cervantes, Bach, Voltaire, or Elton John.

From an explosion of opposing forces, today's students are delightfully baroque, and especially outrageous to all monuments to delayed progression who would like everyone to start acting seventy years old as soon as he reaches puberty. I am not blind to alarming conditions that exist in areas plagued by professional malcontents and drugged cults, but around here behavior is relatively casual even among the conspicuously liberated. I enjoy the dress styles that have made both Lady Godiva and the Salavation Army famous. I like the hairdos that remind me variously of fiberglass sheep dogs, mops in all-night restaurants, or what Delilah did. I try to adjust to frenetic music that sounds like instruments falling on cement, to songs that imitate a gallstone attack, to art that makes astigmatism inconsequential, and to dances that remind me of Siva trampling out death. I even try to digest the spacey lingo of the times, realizing that we are experiencing the same kind of language burgeoning that must have sent Shakespeare into ecstasy.

Jorge Luis Borges says that what is good no longer belongs to anyone. If he is wrong, as I think he is, it belongs to today's students, despite the fact that the world has seldom looked really promising to people of their age. Literature will help convince them that their condition is not as exclusive as it seems and that the world has a tendency to squirm out of endless difficulties. The main thing is not to expect a great moment of total clarity, a parousia of the whole scheme. It may be true that we have accumulated more factual knowledge in the last 25 years than in all preceding centuries, and possibly a little additional wisdom. Certainly the earthly brain, now made up of four billion cells, should be more inventive and productive than anything we have seen. It must also tolerate more spectacular headaches. It will not, however, find the answers to all of its questions, nor should anyone wish it. It would be impossible to love anything in a world of absolute certainty. *Euetheia,* man's primal ignorance about the mystery of the ultimate nature of things, has energized almost every signficant human quest. Without it we would have a literature of insufferable dullness, no religions, and no saving communion of concern about origins, purposes, and destiny.

I do take time out for wonderment on transistory questions in miscellaneous order of importance. Will the professional football season begin on July 4th? Will the TV ads bottom out in my time? Will hot media make the mind useless? Will pretentiousness, combined with total insensitivity to language, produce more vapid words and phrases than input, counterproductive, characterological, maximize, chairperson, Ms, and at this point in time? Will we reach 1984 before it reaches us? How long before we can expect the meek to inherit the earth? Will the Arabs spend our money more wisely than Congress? What startling progress lies ahead in pedagogy? Will someone devise micro-mini courses with matching objectives? Will we give university credit for workshops on the ABC's in depth? Will education become totally computerized, with cunning teaching machines and recorded voices that give nothing but the right answers? This system, known as *Gigo,* "garbage in—garbage out," does away with the need to care about anyone. Perhaps it will go the way of rapid-reading gadgets that trained people to read and

appreciate the works of Shakespeare during their lunch hour. Someone finally discovered that anything which can be read at 2000 words per minute shouldn't have been written in the first place.

And what willl be the harvest of Fem Lib, that aftermath of perma-press? I hope the movement will escape the fate of most resurgent crusades, death through an excess of virtue. As a teacher, I have never questioned the natural superiority of women; neither have I questioned Kipling's thesis that the female of the species is more deadly than the male. Women corrupted by power could reach new heights of ugliness. So I view the turn of the balance wheel with ambivalent feelings of respect and fear. I cannot share our cultural attitude that women are mainly desirable necessities for orderly domesticity, and that they deserve occasional comfort as lesser beings through patronizing sermons that extol any admirable qualities not considered a hazard to men.

Although women were the meson forces that held ancient societies together, a role they still play in some parts of the world, our literary, artistic, and religious traditions have been male dominated. I suspect that the dominion has been more a triumph of fear than of merit or the ostensible will of God. Men have always been nonplussed by the ease with which women express their feminine nature and maintain their mystique. Shaky masculinity has always needed the support of feathered headbands, weapons, uniforms, athletic gear, hob-nailed shoes, aftershave, sports cars, myths, and pulpits. The wonder is that the pose has held for so long.

Women's achievements today give me the same feeling I used to get when water made its way through a long, dry, and weedy ditch with enough left over to do some good. But their ascendant position isn't all gladsome. The blatancy of the campaign for rights, indeed a just outcry, has deflected attention from certain mentionable facts. Many women feel no need for equal rights because they have never been without them. They haven't even known they were in bondage. After all, a desire for freedom beyond the limits of Robert Frost's definition, "feeling loose in your harness," is dangerous in either men or women, for it threatens civilization. There is no such thing as freedom, only freedom of choice. Also, I hardly need to point out that many women who

are liberated by self-design are women only by accident. It simply wouldn't have mattered. The world has no urgent need for women who look and act like men. We are happily still well supplied, though, with women who enjoy being conspicuously identifiable and who avoid being heraldic cut-outs of women rampant, passant, regardant, or couchant.

Women should not risk using methods of men to sustain their image, or nothing will result but the inversion of stances. I suggest that they follow the example of certain African women who are so secure in their positions that they do all they can to make men feel good about their inadequacies. It would also be to their glory if they maintained their positions by more credible means than self-applied honorifics, convenient scriptural passages from that male chauvinist Pharisee, the apostle Paul, and revelations—all signs of desperation.

Will the humanities—English, history, languages, and philosophy—the disciplines that concern themselves with what Santayana called the momentous in life, survive the onslaughts by quick-change artists, gimmick-mongers, doom-prophets, measurers and labelers? I could spare you a discussion by simply stating that they will, but that gets me into the realm of faith, where I am not comfortable. The humanities remind me of a big bird that moves with such serenity and composure that it annoys all of the sparrows, who insist on picking at it because they can't think of anything else to do. We in the humanities are in trouble only because the professional alarmists say we are. The students are unaware of the grave crisis, though, and keep wandering blindly into our classes, presumably to be ripped off again by people who sell vagaries like the tragic sense, humanistic concern, archetypal responses, the questioning mind, and whatever is the opposite of gullibility.

We are often criticized for lacking relevancy because we insist that Shakespeare, Machiavelli, Plato, and the myths are always relevant, and because we don't call everything that litters literature (pun, courtesy of Louise Pound). We have an old fashioned dubiousness about fads, and we refuse to call something a classic before it is published. We like to wait until anything shiny and new and salvational develops its inevitable wear pattern or disappears naturally into the fog of waning enthusiasm. Signs of progress are often simply new labels on old cans. Nothing has really happened, for

example, when one defines a human being as anomic or autonomous, but today any change in nomenclature is accepted as forward movement. Buzzwords like behavioral objective or cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains may have a certain usefulness, but mainly they just glamorize the obvious. At worst, they are genteel forms of hypocrisy.

I feel almost apologetic about my inadequate respect for much of today's investigation into new frontiers of educational theory and studies of nuances in behavioral patterns. The refinement of refinements ultimately reaches what Dr. Vickers called "the little end of nothing, drawn down." For instance, when I read that someone has been studying the effects of orotic acid on the acquisition, extinction, and reacquisition of conditioned responses in cockroaches, I am not sure whether the researcher is seeking new dimensions of enlightenment or merely has as uneasy feeling that something could have been done about Gregor Samsa. "For who hath despised the day of small things?" asked Zechariah, and I answer, almost no one who wants to get published.

There is no escape from what Sartre called our insolence, namely the delving into the conditions of our existence; but someone must act as a parados against the zealots who would turn universities into Procrustean beds or giant Skinner boxes. The humanities will serve. I trust that we will be the last to succumb to professional twaddlers and resist being shrunken to fit a univac system created by the genius of modern technocracy. We promise to become concerned with all the marvels just as soon as the world runs out of cheap non-human energy and technology finishes what it is doing to society and the environment. We do admire the wizardry of the methods experts who wish to vivify us and offer us hope of survival through the application of modern techniques in teaching. I was stopped short of idolatry, though, when I read an ecstatic report by a plastic-coated English teacher, a neo-virtuoso with electronic devices, who used a slide projector and a stereophonic jungle of sounds to "summarize and dramatize the philosophical, sociological, literary, and theological ramificaitons of *Wuthering Heights, Lord of the Flies, Macbeth, Hamlet, Brave New World, 1984, Animal Farm* and *Farenheit 451.*" The performance convinced the students that there is evil lurking in all of

us. I recall that Mary Ellen Chase used to furnish an even more memorable experience by just talking to people in her Dante and Bible classes. It was told that her students never forget anything because it would be a disgrace to meet Miss Chase on the street years later and not be able to remember who was in Circle 6. Since few teachers are that effective by themselves, an obbligato of some kind is often helpful.

Less helpful are the measures, testers, and labelers. If one can't think of anything else to do with another human being, he can always test him and pin him up where he seems to belong. No one denies that tests are handy tools, and even indispensable, but they have become objects of worship to many people who find it necessary to reduce all mysteries to a level they can comprehend and evaluate. They would determine the aesthetic value and historical significance of the Parthenon by checking its dimensions against the golden mean proportion of 1:1.618, and they would send God himself routine questionnaires on celestial procedures and objectives.

Some years ago a fretful Cassandra predicted that soon all education might be directed toward the passing of standardized tests. We are seeing prophecy fulfilled in our day. The next step is to offer classes in how to pass tests without really knowing anything. If we lack the faculty for such instruction, we have the necessary talent in many students. What most standardized tests measure is the willingness of someone to make them up and administer them. Education then becomes what the measurers insist that it is, and no one could convince them that the tests do not necessarily reveal the significant or that their labels are no more than signs of failure in complete comprehension. There is a sort of bastard Heisenberg principle involved here: the act of measurement does not destroy or change the object, but does change its nature and value in the eye of the beholder.

I am not speaking any great truth, only voicing alarm about an excess in a test-happy world. I'm sure that my viewpoint is an outrage to more objective people in education and the social and exact sciences, but I do believe that testing is too often a psalmist's exercise to determine nothing more than who is fit to dwell in the temple. With more than chagrin I wonder at the number of creative and exciting people who are kept out of graduate schools by

the shibboleths of the G.R.E., now as sacred as Deuteronomy and as merciless as conscience. I have considered starting a rumor that excessive testing has been shown to cause cancer in rats, but that ruse has been overworked.

Besides, I have an uneasy feeling that I may be like Joseph Wood Krutch, wanting to appear intellectual in proportion to the number of things I don't believe in. It's the easy way, especially when one begins to sense the futility of keeping up with frantic change. I used to think that life was a hook in the mouth, but that one could at least learn to swing gracefully on the hook, exercising Greek serenity under stress. Now I am more inclined to a metaphor suggested by an electron trying to avoid precession about the nucleus of its atom by pretending that the nucleus isn't spinning.

Since we cannot rethink the universe back into its original chaos and improve certain gross aspects of creation or change the nature of inherent inevitabilities, we must accept the ethos that exists, though we can complain about it. This brings me discursively to a final observation on a conflict that I hoped would either decrease in its intensity or increase in its amusement value during my lifetime. It has done neither. Like opposing colors in the yang-yin monad, mankind tends to divide itself into two groups of thinkers, horizontal and vertical, depending on the nature of the food that interests them most: earthly for the horizontals, spiritual for the verticals. This dichotomy wouldn't concern me were it not for the fact that university teachers in the humanities, and English teachers in particular, appear slanted to both groups. The truly horizontal person, eyes on reality and sensing no threat to his position, simply labels us impractical. The verticals, however, are fearful about our oblique postures and concerns. We may at any moment look up and question the system. Not in self-defense—they don't need any—but to alert their followers to wariness, they call us worse things than fat-hearted or BRAND X: corrupt humanists, misguided intellectuals, and even atheists.

I do know some humanists with shameless unconcern for the whole package of spiritual promises because they simply don't feel the need for any additional rewards to the privilege of life. Intellectuals are misguided by natural tendency away from comforting certainties and all assumptions that won't stand the test of reason.

Regarding atheists, my experience is negligible. I have known only one avowed atheist in my life, and I disliked him for other reasons. God wouldn't have cared much for him either. Mr. Vonnegut calls such people *wrang-wrangs*. Because of their personal absurdity, we choose to ignore their ways of life and their points of view. We should be grateful for their wide distribution among both the horizontals and the verticals, for they help us to reduce wasteful enthusiasm for either side.

To this afterthought in defense of my kind, I add a deserved apology in conclusion of this address for its iotacism, a Greek word used to disparage conspicuous display of the perpendicular pronoun *I*. Unfortunately, it doesn't look any more humble turned upside down. Besides, I could not think of any objective way to express the gratification and excitement I have felt in doing what I do every day in this university, or my sense of constant wonderment that has made learning a Dantean thirst. I think I was born without an inclination to make or accept final pronouncements on the grand idea that is back of what we are; and I do not expect to make a more definitive statement at the end than dish Joshua, grateful for all the good things that had not failed, or Pascal in his brief will: "I have no money; the rest I leave to the poor."